Surveys and Monitoring

Sightings –
Send all sightings of either red or grey squirrels to **Heather on 07536 076131**. If you find a sick or dead red with signs of the squirrel pox please contact Heather immediately as it needs to be examined and or sent for testing to verify whether it has the pox or not.

Casual Surveys
Results to John at **john.rae@berwickredsquirrelgroup.org** with –
Date
The name of the wood,
Grid ref if known,
Type of tree - conifers, broadleaf or both
Evidence or none of squirrels

Importance - In our attempts to conserve red squirrels, surveying and monitoring our woods goes hand in hand with the control of greys.
Without surveying we would not know where squirrels are,
and without monitoring we do not know how effective the control is or when grey squirrels come into a wood.

Access - All of these woods are privately owned and before we do any work in them it is essential to get the owners permission.
However for our initial surveys often we can use footpaths or roads that run through them without obtaining permission first.

Monitoring Equipment.
Hair tubes are lengths of plastic down pipe 300mm long. These tubes are secured to a tree branch using wire so as not to damage the timber. Two sticky pads are affixed inside to the roof of this tube, one at each end. Bait is placed in the centre of the tube. When a squirrel enters the tube to obtain the food it leaves hairs attached to the sticky pads.
Monitor/Feeder boxes work in a similar way. These are boxes with clear front and hinged lifting lid that are attached to a tree and filled with bait. The pads are affixed under the lid of the feeder. When the squirrel lifts the lid to obtain the bait hairs are left on the pads.
Hair from a red squirrel has indent along one side which, under a microscope, shows as a dark band running the length of the hair. Hairs from a grey do not have this indentation.
Motion Sensitive Camera In some circumstances it will be more practical to confirm the identification of the species by setting up a monitor/feeder box and then placing a wildlife camera on an adjacent tree. The resulting photos confirm the identification.

Ongoing Surveys and Monitoring.
Walk through the wood or along a fixed transects recording –
Date
Type of woodland
squirrel sightings
feeding signs and dreys
Monitor fixed hair tubes and monitoring/feeding boxes for squirrel hairs.

Trees – Squirrel favourites

Species	Cones	Bark
Scots Pine (Native, red squirrels evolved eating them)	small, pointed, woody scales, hang down off branch.	Scaly, deeply fissured, orange red colour
Corsican Pine (Import from Corsica)	large, shiny, woody scales, hanging down. Cone grows lopsided	Vertically fissured dark greyish-brown
Sitka Spruce (Import from Alaska)	long light brown with thin papery scales with crinkled edges	Greyish-brown with flaky round scales
Norway Spruce (Import from Norway) Traditional Christmas tree.	long cylindrical brown hanging down	Greyish-brown smooth bark often with rusty tint
Larch (Hybrid – European / Japanese)	Small cylindrical cones with rounded scales	Grey-brown fissured into regular plates

Feeding Sign

Scots pine cones

Larch Cones

Sitka spruce cones

Squirrels eat cones from the bottom up. They hold the cone with one paw and pull the scales off with their teeth, they may a finger to flick the seed into their mouth. As a result, a bit of the scale is left on the cone, giving the eaten cone a slightly 'feathered' appearance. If the squirrel is eating the cones in a tree, the cones can be dropped over a wide area. Sometimes squirrels like to sit on a tree stump or feeding post and you will find a lot of eaten cones and scales around this post.

Mice gnaw each scale off the cone and then eat the seed. This leaves a very neat eaten cone. Mice often take cones to one location to eat (often one that is partly hidden) so you may find a lot of moused cones in the one place.

Squirrel dreys

Dreys are >50 cm diameter and >30 cm deep and are usually built close to the main stem of a tree with support from one or more side branches, and at heights of anything from 3 m upwards.